National Occupational Research Agenda

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

- Each day, an average of 9,000 U.S. workers sustain disabling injuries on the job, 16 workers die from a work-related injury, and 137 workers die from work-related illness. The annual cost of occupational injuries alone is estimated to be $240 billion.
- The total federal investment in research to prevent occupational injuries and illnesses was $266 million dollars in 2000, approximately a one cent investment in prevention for every $10 of economic losses that might have been avoided.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

In 1996, CDC and its outside partners established the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA), a framework to guide occupational safety and health research through the next decade. The NORA process resulted in a remarkable consensus about the top 21 occupational safety and health research priorities. NORA is an agenda not only for CDC, but for the Nation as a whole. Through the impetus of NORA, CDC has energized occupational safety and health research, leveraged resources of other federal agencies to support NORA, pursued an active program of intramural and extramural research, and developed new research partnerships with stakeholders. NORA continues to be an innovative, multi-disciplinary national research agenda built on strong partnerships with public, private, and non-profit organizations and continues to be modeled at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Example of program in action: As a result of NORA, CDC has increased its overall investment in extramural research and has leveraged funding from other federal agencies for occupational safety and health research. In 2002, CDC partnered with 14 other federal agencies to support NORA grants and cooperative agreements. This represents a 79% increase in partnerships since 1998. An example of an effective partnership is the collaboration formed among CDC, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Federal Highway Administration, paver manufacturers, and asphalt industry and labor organizations in order to have engineering controls installed in new paving machines. The controls protect workers from exposure to asphalt fumes during paving operations. In the mid-1990s, CDC demonstrated that engineering controls properly installed on highway-class paving machines can reduce asphalt fume exposure by up to 50%. The process of installing engineering controls is underway. CDC aims to facilitate and track the installation of controls on virtually all U.S. highway-class pavers by 2010.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

The development of NORA was only the first step in an ongoing effort between CDC and its many partners to guide occupational safety and health research into the future. As the impact of NORA continues to grow, the Nation is better positioned to address the toll of workplace injury and death. Through NORA, CDC will build on existing successes by broadening partnerships in occupational safety and health research; expanding efforts to collaborate with other federal agencies; and targeting new research initiatives to ensure that NORA continues to make a difference in protecting worker safety and health.

For additional information on this and other CDC programs, visit www.cdc.gov/programs. *February 2003*